

Titus 2:3–5

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Date: 13 October 2024

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[0 : 00] Titus 2, 3-5. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. Good morning and welcome to Christ Church Chicago.

So glad you're here. You've come in the midst of a series in this little letter of Paul to Titus. Last week we devoted an entire sermon to his considerations that pertain to older men.

Next week, you'll notice, if you look at the text, we plan on delivering a sermon related to younger men. So find the younger men in your life and invite them next week.

[1 : 13] Today, they're between the older men and the younger men. It seems that Paul would have Timothy say some things to both the older and the younger women.

Last week, I titled the message, The Good That Can Come From Going Gray. This week, I want to title it, The Good That Comes From Intergenerational Joy.

Last week, we looked at a church worth joining would have older men worthy of following. This week, I simply want to argue that a church worth joining has women joyfully expressing the truth of God's word together.

Just get that little bit in your mind. Women joyfully expressing the truth of God's word together.

Well, how do we launch into that? I think of the little line there in the middle, the truth of God's word. It might be something that I'm out to convince you of this morning.

[2 : 20] It might be something that Paul is asking the older and younger women in Crete to consider in his own morning. But I'm well aware that the idea of anything called the truth, let alone the truth of God's word, is not something that's universally held.

Most likely, it's not held by a number of people who are here this morning as you've been walking through life, trying to consider and thoughtfully give yourself to a discovery of truth.

We're used to thinking about our own truth, aren't we? Live your truth. We're not quite so clear or confident that there is something called the truth.

Yet, let's start with that idea. For centuries, the aim, the goal of a liberal education was to arrive at the truth.

A number of disciplines, whether they be sciences or humanities. The goal is to arrive at something better than untruth.

[3 : 36] It's to arrive at something called the truth. I was thinking this week of Professor Leon Kass. Some of you will know the name, most of you won't. He's the Addie Clark Harding Professor Emeritus in the college, in our own neighborhood, and on the Committee of Social Thought at the University of Chicago.

Years and years ago, he delivered an address in Rockefeller Chapel, which is just two blocks north of us here on Woodlawn, at the start of an academic year.

They had all the undergrads of the college present and cast speaking on the goal and aim of liberal education.

He began this way. Collegiate liberal education in the United States is almost everywhere in retreat. With college tuition and post-graduation debt soaring, practically-minded young Americans increasingly concentrate on more useful studies in an effort to obtain quickly marketable skills and start building careers.

He goes on, what then could be left for the aim of a liberal education? But, he says, the cultivation in each of us of the disposition actively to seek the truth and to make the truth our own.

[5 : 08] That's a stunning phrase. He wants you to consider that as we interact with one another on any discipline of life, we are trying to make the truth our own.

To own that which is true rather than to live our own truth unhinged from that which might be connected to that which is true.

To own that which is true, I'm well aware that Paul thinks he's arrived at something called the truth. And that it's a truth that would affect your behavior and mine, whether we're older or younger, men or women.

I mean, that's the way he began. Just take a look back, Titus 1. He calls himself a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's elect. Look at it.

And their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness. Paul is asking you to consider thoughtfully this morning and over the coming months and years of your life that he arrived at something he called the truth.

[6 : 26] And the truth actually reinvigorated life today in ways that put it on a better footing. Now, there's no secret that the world in which you and I live is clueless on providing answers for us on how we might live well.

I mean, just listen to the congregational prayer. Wars continue to move. Violence continues to increase. Let's just admit it. The world is at a loss on how to put us behaviorally on a better footing. Paul seems to think that the world needed saving and that Jesus came to do that work. And that when he came to do that work between us and God, it actually reordered a better way of life among one another.

This is what the little letter is now trying to describe. That sound faith, which is in accord with what he would call sound doctrine, has a consequence of sound or better living.

Now, you may at the end of the sermon or the end of your life disagree with Paul, but you ought to thoughtfully engage his thought. I think he would argue that a church worth joining concerning women, a church worth joining is teeming with women who are joyfully expressing the truth of God's word, as he understands it, together.

[8 : 04] What does that look like?

He's arguing that older women that develop these characteristics are manifesting a life of godliness that is in accord with the truth that begins to put things back in order.

I mean, let's think about it for a moment. This word reverent. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior.

This word here is the bringing together of two words and making them one. It's the word of the temple joined to that which are sacred or holy things.

So a reverent woman is one who, in a sense, is joining life in the temple, holding, ministering, serving with things that are sacred.

[9 : 42] He wants to say older women, in a sense, play that role. Now, those words are unusual for us. We're not thinking in those terms. But for the women in Crete, this idea of a reverent woman in behavior, they would not have had to reach for definition on this.

They would not have had to reach for description on this, even though it's worth our time to take a look at this. You need to know that Crete had a storied past when it came to the gods, the Greek gods, long before the Roman era.

In fact, Zeus is purported to have been born on the island of Crete. Zeus is purported to have been buried on Crete.

Crete then had five such temples. As even today, I'm told I haven't been there yet, you can take tours of some of the temples that were, in a sense, still manifesting the care of Zeus.

Because that's what temple life was like. And for the women in Crete of this day, they would have had a much nearer approximation to what holy things in the temple in connection to women would mean.

[10 : 57] For in Rome, there were priestesses who served. Vestal virgins. I've read up on it a little bit.

It is a highly respected order. Women who dedicated themselves to a 30-year period of service. I mean, imagine that. I mean, you sign up for four years to go here or three years to go there or a job that wants you for two years.

In Rome, there were women signing up for 30 years of serving in the temple, handling the sacred things. Their primary responsibilities were around being pure, seeking the prosperity of the city, helping with the religious rituals all throughout Rome.

And the temple served as the site for that activity, the establishing of communication with God. It's not just a Greco-Roman thing.

It's a Jewish thing. You could think of someone like Anna in the New Testament, who's an aged, older woman who generally went to the temple to offer her prayers.

[12:11] Her behavior was such that she was seeking and asking for the consolation of Israel to come. So with all of these things in mind, and even in a contemporary way today, if you traveled to Crete and walked into some of the remains of the temples dedicated to Zeus, you would find wall paintings with women beautifully adorned, laboring for the welfare of the God of that city.

So too, now, Paul is saying older women in the church, the household of God, older women are reverent.

They are serving in holy ways in all of their behavior. Now, what does that look like? What would it look like, this radiance of reverence?

Well, he says here, he goes on, not slanderers. I've heard slander defined this way. Quote, slander is speaking untruth about someone else.

So their reputation is damaged. These untruths are sometimes flat-out lies designed to inflict maximum harm.

[13:37] But often, slander takes the form of deceptive inferences, assuming the worst of others instead of the best, or deliberately crafting a preferred narrative out of conveniently edited facts.

What a definition. I've seen it. You've seen it. This isn't a female characteristic by definition. Men slander, as do women. You have been the recipient of slander, most likely, and the perpetuator of it as well.

Literally, the word there is the devil. You're not going to act like the devil. See, the devil, back in Genesis 1, was an accuser.

He accuses people falsely. Can I just say, as your pastor, that to encounter a man or a woman, or an older woman in the church, who is engaged in slander, it's one of the most unbecoming, unbeautiful, ugly things to see.

[15:02] I've seen people degrade their husbands needlessly, or others hurtfully.

And all he's saying here is, you don't really want to do that in the household of God, especially if you're an older woman trying to demonstrate what life looks like in God's family.

We're here to build one another up, not to tear one another down. The story's told of a person who spread slanderous untruth in a variety of settings.

The pastor got wind of it. He asked her to go to the home of everyone that she had spoken deceitfully or wrongly against. Everyone whose carefully narrated version of the facts would conveniently undermine someone.

In a misinformation kind of way. He says, I want you to go back to all their homes and put a feather on the doorstep of each one and come back and talk to me. And so she did. And when she came back, he said, now I want you to go back and pick up all the feathers.

[16:15] She said, that's impossible. The wind has blown them away. And he said, so it is. So it is with our words. When we downgrade others deceitfully, maliciously, when we speak ill of them with ill intent, when we carefully narrate facts that serve a view that will injure them, he's saying that you're no longer demonstrating the radiance of reverence.

You're no longer adorning your life by what's coming out of your mouth with things that are building up. And so it is with all of the older women in our midst.

Let me just put it as clearly and practically as I can. And slander is going to go on as long as you and I are in the land of the living. If you're an older woman here, let it not come from your class.

Let it not come from your stature. Let it not come from you. He goes on. They're not slaves to much wine.

In other words, it's not just what comes out of us that would be irreverent or unhelpful. At times it can be what occurs because of the things that we take into us.

[17:44] And alcohol is one of those things. Did you know that during the pandemic, during the pandemic, according to the RAND Corporation study, women increased their heavy drinking days by 41%.

Now, I don't know what it's like in cities because cities were notoriously isolated. 41% found that moment of isolation, one in which heavy drinking actually began to increase.

And it isn't that you shouldn't be able to have a glass of wine, but these ads about going to Harrah's and tipping your wine glass with four other ladies at the end of every day is a good escape.

But you shouldn't need to have a designated driver. Everyone in your company should be designated and capable of driving. What he's saying is you don't want to be out of control of yourself.

Bad things happen to you, and bad things occur as a result of you when you deal with life's problems by just thinking, maybe I can just drink this thing away.

[19 : 06] Now, I know it's an allure, but as you open the doors of a church and you begin to look inside, what he's saying is, when I look in that family, when I look in that house, if I was to come into Christ Church Chicago, I would find older women who in speech know what it's like at times to fulfill Proverbs 11, 12, whoever belittles her neighbor lacks sense, but a woman of understanding remains silent.

And we would also have women who know what it is to always be in control of themselves. That's not all. He says older women are to teach what is good, literally to be teaching the good.

You've got to supply the what, the content. They'll be teachers of good. Teachers of good. Not only the content of what they do, but the behavior that comes as a consequence of the content.

Teaching that which is good. Sound teaching rooted in sound doctrine leads to sound living. The older women in our church ought to know truth for today.

They ought to be able to make that link for anyone else in our community. This is why Marjorie Meeks serves on our staff team with a teaching responsibility of the women, for the women, older women, to younger women because we believe that all women ought to be engaged in Christian ministry, that some women need to be equipped according to their gifts to handle word ministry on behalf of the women in the church.

[21 : 00] So we're not adverse to this. This actually is what has guided me with an organization some of you know I've run for many years called the Charles Simeon Trust.

We train predominantly preachers and Bible teachers all over the world to hopefully better handle the Bible than they did the year before.

In 2006 we began training and teaching women Bible teachers to do that very thing. This year we will train well over a thousand women to be handling the Bible well for the women in their congregations.

We're committed to it because this is the call. This is the job of the local church to have women who can do this, handle this.

So how do we gather our gains? If you're an older woman in our midst and you're looking for Paul's sense of well what does he want from me? He wants you radiant by way of reverence.

[22 : 07] He wants you in the church serving, ministering, praying, helping. He wants no slander.

He wants you in control of your mind and your life because you haven't given yourself over to too much wine. He wants you to be able to teach good both by way of content and what it means practically as it's lived out.

I've been searching this week in my mind for an analogy that would capture in some sense what I think is the elevated beauty of this text in a way that you would be like I want to embrace that.

It made me begin to think about the season of fall and the falling of leaves. I envision a leaf budding on a limb in the spring time just emerging.

That's a beautiful thing to see but there is a glory on a higher plane when the leaf enters its final frame of its all too brief life.

[23 : 20] I'm not a botanist but I'm sure any botanist in our midst could better explain more adequately than me how when chlorophyll okay whatever that is is that which provides green pigment and turns all the stuff green probably botanists are out there laughing right now no you're already messing it up.

Stay with me it's an analogy imperfect I'm sure. chlorophyll gives the leaf its green pigment and color as that begins to withdraw for a number of factors including the fall and the cold and the rain and the sun and all the stuff I don't know about.

Other pigments become more visible which causes the leaf to go red or orange or yellow. Now think of it only as life giving chlorophyll recedes do leaves express the brilliance of color that exceeds its

previous beauty tenfold.

By analogy then and as an encouragement to the older women in our congregation know this at the time when the external flowering of your youth fades your life can and should be expressing to us the hidden beauties of the truth of God's word that were there all the way along but are now manifested because you have become who you are.

These women in our midst are the revealers of the goodness of God and therefore are ever more worthy of our God fearing gaze.

[25 : 06] this is the picture of older women in the church suddenly you've been in my life life giving but your look spiritually your behavior what I take in is the brilliance of the beauty of God's word which has framed your life.

Now that ought to be an encouragement because everywhere else in the world they're telling you to get back to the green pigment in order to stay beautiful. they're lying to you.

This probably sounds bad I'd just say it so let the lines come. You are to be more beautiful with each passing year.

Your behavior is to be a demonstration to us that the church finds you pleasant in every respect. you know my mother-in-law passed away a few years ago.

Lisa who's not here today because she's at a wedding of a colleague was with her mom when her mom died. Her mom raised five kids all girls intergenerational joy.

[26 : 22] Lisa would tell the story of herself and two other of her sisters who were there at that moment when she passed transition from this world to the next.

And she says in her words it is something she will never forget. Her mom fading from the disease of mind and body suddenly her eyes were bright and vivid and filled with the color of youth.

Lisa began to think that she actually had a glow about her almost as if she was looking at something else in the room. I know this sounds supernatural but my wife's no wallflower and she's pretty much attached to the reality of this world and if she said it it happened.

And she watched her mother's face blossom on all the radiance of beauty almost as though she saw the coming of the coming world or the meeting of Christ or whatever it is you might say and then her flame extinguished.

As you age you are to be ever more beautiful. And the church needs to understand embrace and encourage foster and support that kind of beauty.

[27 : 53] So when the day comes older women in our midst when you draw your final breath when that subtle wind blows and dislodges you from the land of the living and the branch of this life may we remember and celebrate a beauty in your later years that we never noticed at first.

What's the outcome of that? The outcome is listed right there younger women and so that life so trains the younger women.

See the older women in our midst have the indispensable privileged role the most important role in bringing the upcoming generation to know what is and what isn't what's true and what's not what ought to be desired and what ought to be refrained from.

See the mentoring the training here literally in one sense the training is to recall them to their senses.

It's not that young women don't have sense believe me you got a lot more sense than young men we'll get to them next week. It's not that they don't have sense but it's that the older women train them in giving them a better perspective a more complete picture the intergenerational joy.

[29 : 36] Older women have the strategic role on the health and happiness of this church and a strategic role in the growth of the gospel in our midst and so then as they live that way it is training it is helping the rest come to understand what it is they ought to be pursuing and he lists six things it would have a positive impact on younger women look at verses 2 4b through 5 and so train the younger women to love their husbands and children to be self-controlled pure working at home kind and submissive to their own husbands a list of six things written generically from the perspective of those who end up getting married certainly not exclusive to that but for those that are married they ought to have a certain character first they ought to be lovers of their own husbands and children that's not always easy

I said as a husband and a child that was off the chain in my younger days I understand husbands present some challenges understatement right yeah I understand children provide an incredible number of stresses and he says love love them now there are some women who say I read the

Ephesians thing I prefer that it says the husband needs to love the wife all the wife's got to do is respect the husband well you're not off the hook here because here he's like no you've got to love them too they're supposed to love and respect you you're supposed to love and respect them but can you imagine them writing the opposite you know and so train the younger women to care less about the one they're engaged to or married to and leave their kids into who know whose hands remember one writer said the education of children for

God is the most important business done on earth! I love that line to it all politics all war all literature all money making ought to be subordinated and every parent husband and wife especially ought to feel every hour of the day that next to making their own calling and election sure this is the end for which they are kept alive by God this is their task on earth what we're doing is giving ourselves then to the next generation in those nuclear families or grandmothers to children this is why the church needs to support incredibly support single parents who are trying to do everything without anyone else co-laboring alongside but you have to love them I know there are times when you go you know what these kids are driving me crazy he says yeah that that happens love love is patient kind it's not easily offended love at times is tough it's persistent believes the best you know we raised five kids and now

I'm watching my kids raise our nine grandkids and I can just tell you that we don't regret a moment of the effort now that we're on this side of the daily exercise it's exhausting but the product of watching your children enter adulthood can also be exhausting but the chapters aren't done are they and we pray that as we give ourselves to children as our younger women in our congregation give themselves to the difficulty and the joy of all that that they would do so in love self controlled he says our younger women ought to have control of themselves more on that next week for the younger men pure my neighbor she's in her 90s her husband has passed she's lived right next door to me for the 27 years

I've been there she's probably there 27 years before her name is agnes this week I was walking through this text in Greek language and came to this word pure and the word pure is agnes and I thought wow that name kind of went out of vogue agnes means pure what a great thing to be now you all know that none of us is pure in fact earlier in this letter he was berating those who saw everything in life as impure so there's good and there's bad mingled and now if you're going to be pure it deals with your disposition and your frame but it also requires the work of Christ in your life you can't get pure from the inside without Jesus coming in and doing some sweeping doing some saving doing some investigation you know what I found when I let Jesus into my life it's like bringing in something you really wanted to buy into your home and you put him up on the mantle and there he is and now he's taking over your life and you start looking at him and you go man this other stuff got to go because this other stuff doesn't look anything like him see so what happens with purity is it comes into us over time as we thoughtfully give ourselves what am

[35 : 52] I doing why am I doing it is this healthy is it healthy for me is it wholesome is it good and all of a sudden purity begins to grow because the spirit of God in well I guess we've arrived at one of the moments in the text where you're wondering is this really the truth what does it mean to be working at home it's not so much is this true but how is this true imagine if we had younger women that were lacking any concern at all for the care management oversight of their home

I mean who would want to walk into that condo who wants to walk into that house who actually wants to walk into a place of disorder and this isn't something that simply women do but it needs to in a sense be the primary place that although you may do many things it's not saying can you have a job outside the home I would say of course you can it's saying as you live and provide and work in your family make sure you don't neglect to be at work in your home because at home everything comes up and out of it's the engine from which all health proceeds so give yourself to that continually give yourself to that I think of the Proverbs 31 woman she wasn't asking the question does this mean I can be involved in a secular employment no the Proverbs 31 woman is buying and selling fields she's like involved in industry she's an entrepreneur but she was also raising her son who would be a king and saying this is kind!

you got to live working busy at home this is really I think what's here we get so lost and confused and wondering well what can I and can I not do and all of a sudden the women in the church are pitted against one another are you working at home or do you actually have a job and all of a sudden the one that is at home wow that's a privilege be married to someone or your family has means by which you don't have to be employed in a job to bring things in that that's a great place

that ought to be celebrated in fact sacrifices that are made among married couples or parents to provide that kind of context ought to be just just like mutually embraced praise God for that but at the same time all praise all honor all encouragement needs to go to the women in our midst who are like wow

I got a lot more to do than simply that but I can't neglect it at the same time all of these things have to be taking place Martin Luther said what you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it up in heaven for our Lord God may that be an encouragement for everyone who's behind their own door busy working at home wishing man am I supposed to be here am I encouraged to be here to people are they pleased that I'm here you got to remind yourself what you do in your home is as what you are doing for the Lord in heaven and we support you in it proverbs 14 1 says the wisest of women builds her house but folly with her own hands tears it down so we say don't tear down your own home make it a priority and then he says you ought to be kind younger women ought to be kind one woman in our church who knew

I was preaching on this text communicated to me I like to see this whole passage as a get to and not a got to I get to do these things what a great disposition kindness ought to be emerging submissiveness to their own husbands now what is meant by this and what would hold us to this you need to know that some have weaponized this word to serve incredible harm on women there's no place for that understanding this is not a question of some unequal status among men and women the bible is very clear we don't even it's amazing that you even have to say it again but when God created man he created them male and female he created them in his own image the equality between the men and the women are never to be debated and a man who would turn to this text in some coercive so what does it mean

[41 : 18] I simply I think it means that married women who are Christians find ways to exhibit in a practical sense both interdependence and deference toward their husbands in other words she doesn't view herself as completely independent of him I'm going to do what I'm going to do nor does she find herself being indifferent to arranging her life in this relationship in ways that continue to demonstrate respect and love of her husband now what that looks like particularly for you we're going to be all over the map but it seems to me that that's what's in play here we're not thinking I'm independent of him and I'm not thinking I have no responsibility to be living in deference to arranging our lives in ways that honor and support and demonstrate that to him why would you do that well Paul is asking from our younger women nothing different than what you and

I can see and experience through the example of Jesus Jesus exhibited in very practical terms practical terms that he was not independent of God the father in regard to his activity in life in fact he joyfully willingly beautifully arranged his life with practical deference toward their mission to save the world and as younger women do that the whole church and the world sees a picture they're unaccustomed to seeing they see practical evidences of the gospel at work within the very Godhead therefore they joyfully embrace it I asked Lisa this week my wife of 40 years what she thought about some of these passages she said well

I taught on this to our women you want me to send you my notes I said you bet I do she summed up these things this way quote I just don't think you can read Titus 2 and say about the Bible gee I wish it were more practical but as we look at the text in this letter let's try to get it right and then she says women we have a history of reading this passage and displacing the clear call to godly conduct by focusing on what is not we allow the evil one to use this very word to divide us rather than to bind us in truth let's read and believe this is god's gracious word to his church the creator to his creation from god and savior to his people his own possession she says here are some questions for us married and single is my home my main sphere of ministry not do

I work or are there women that stay at home you gotta know my wife has worked 16 years the last 16 years full time in the industry of finance without ever once neglecting the welfare of our home is there a cost to that you bet there is and she has embraced that she asked these kinds of questions do I speak words of truth about others or do I backstab others am I busy at home do I love my husband am I submitting to him if I am a mother do I love my children am I growing in kindness and self control and purity because of this she writes I hold my tongue I pack my children's lunches well she must have wrote that a little while ago I take time to encourage another woman in the word I stream a different show I care for my roommate listen carefully line another glass and so on and so on she closes are you a word woman then live it

I would say if we're a church worth joining our women beautifully joyfully express the truth of God's word together that's the benefit of being in a church worth joining because it has women expressing his word together and notice the benefit to those outside and I close with this that the word of God may not be reviled as we live in this way as our women give themselves to one another and to God's word in this way not everyone is going to agree with you not everyone is going to agree with us not everyone is going to consider Paul's claim that there is a truth that would lead you to an ordered life that's godly that kind of looks like this not everyone is going to buy that but he says the word of god is not reviled and it won't be reviled among us last week

[46 : 45] I tried to show you a picture of the doors of the Duomo in Florence Italy opening up to the temple and rooms to be explored yet unseen as the doors of our church open up and we inhabit church life together our older men need to be worthy of following our women need to be beautifully expressing the truth of god's word together and next week we need to see the younger men milling about and knowing how to comport themselves in the household of god and when that happens people are going to look to you and go wow I disagree with everything you believe but I kind of can't say much bad about what

I'm seeing from you our heavenly father help us as we give ourselves to your word and knowing it with humility help us with humility to live well in light of it in Jesus name amen